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# News

## 15 X 15 Does Not Equal 225

*Pamela Carter, Chairperson LIFE Steering Committee*

If you haven't heard yet, "15 X 15" represents Governor Spitzer's goal to reduce energy usage in New York State by 15% from forecast levels by the year 2015 through new energy efficiency programs. This goal addresses the need to reduce the continually rising demand for energy. In response, the Public Service Commission (PSC) instituted the Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard Proceeding in May 2007 to identify the most effective ways to reduce energy usage. Through this proceeding, numerous interested parties have been working collaboratively to address a host of issues related to achieving "15 X 15". Some of the issues being explored include: What structure should be in place to manage the energy efficiency portfolio? What programs and services should be available to encourage energy efficiency for residential, small business, and commercial/industrial customers? What measurements should be established to ensure the effectiveness of energy efficiency programs? What new technologies should be explored to encourage customers to take advantage of energy efficiency measures?

While these issues affect all energy customers, they have particular impact on low-income customers. Low-income customers tend to live in older, energy inefficient housing; they may not have direct control of their energy usage (e.g., heating may be included in rent); they tend to spend a larger share of

their income on energy costs; they do not have the financial means to make the upfront investments required to make energy efficiency improvements; and many have other competing economic priorities (e.g., to heat or eat). To address some of these concerns, the PSC staff has been traveling throughout the State reaching out to consumer advocates, especially those serving the low-income community, to seek input on the Energy Efficiency proceeding. Some of the issues discussed with low-income advocates from Community Assistance Programs, Cooperative Extensions, Social Services Agencies, Weatherization Programs, Senior Citizen groups, and others, include: What energy efficiency programs and services are important to low-income energy users? What incentives would encourage greater participation in energy efficiency programs? What barriers exist that prevent such participation?

In addition to meeting with low-income advocates, as well as residential and business consumer leaders, the PSC held a roundtable with Environmental Justice advocates. This meeting went a step further than the others by identifying specific issues that must be considered to minimize any negative impacts on communities, particularly those with low-income residents, that may be over

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## Announcements

**Ben Wiles**, formerly of the Public Utility Law Project and longtime member of the LIFE Steering Committee, is now a Managing Attorney at The New York State Department of Public Service.

**Evelyn Harris** will be retiring from the New York State Department of State after 27 years of dedicated service. She is an active member of the LIFE Steering Committee and was instrumental in arranging for the implementation of the "Walk-a-Mile" program that will be highlighted at the LIFE Statewide Conference, May 20-21, 2008 in Albany, New York.

The **New York State Community Action Association** is sponsoring the 2008 New York State Second Annual Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security at the New York State Museum Auditorium, February 25-26, 2008 in Albany, New York. See <http://www.nyscaaonline.org/> for more information.

**The National Association of Social Workers, New York State Chapter** is sponsoring the 2008 Power of Social Work Conference, "Promoting the Profession... Paving the Way to Social Work Reinvestment" on March 28, 2008 at the Desmond Hotel, Albany, New York. See [www.naswny.org](http://www.naswny.org) for more information

**The LIFE Steering Committee** welcomes **Connie Clouston**, NYSEC/RGE; **Louis Mantua**, PULP; and **Greg Collar**, Consumer Protection Board.

Conference - Save the Date: **Multifamily Buildings 2008**, New York City, July 21-23, 2008. For more Information, Contact Conference Coordinator - Association for Energy Affordability, Inc. David Hepinstall at [hepinstall@aeanyc.org](mailto:hepinstall@aeanyc.org) or Rhona Saffer at [rsaffer@aeanyc.org](mailto:rsaffer@aeanyc.org)

## January Action Day Urges Congress to Support LIHEAP

*By Sue Montgomery Corey, President, Community Power Network*

Low-income energy advocates will meet in Washington, DC on January 30, 2008 to urge Congress to increase support for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP -- HEAP in New York). The National Fuel Funds Network (NFFN) sponsors this important event, known as Washington Action Day for LIHEAP. Action Day will also feature local events around the country to draw attention to the critical heating crisis facing low-income families, especially this year of record high-energy costs.

Action Day will begin with a briefing by the Washington advocates who make the case for LIHEAP every day. A national press conference, featuring members of Congress and LIHEAP clients, will draw attention to the critical heating crisis facing low-income households across the country. Action Day attendees will meet with Congressional representatives throughout the day. It promises to be an exciting, action-packed and important day for the LIHEAP Program!

NFFN plans to arrange local events around each state, which will highlight the important role that LIHEAP plays in keeping low-income households safe and warm. The Community Power Network of NYS (CPN) has agreed to serve as New York State's Action Day coordinator. CPN intends to ensure that every mem-

ber of the New York Congressional Delegation knows about Action Day and realizes how important their continued support for LIHEAP is for low-income New Yorkers.

With energy costs at an all-time high, making the case for LIHEAP is more important this year than ever. Whether you can come to Washington or sponsor a local event in your community, your involvement is absolutely critical.

### Consider Taking Action!

Registering for Action Day is easy! NFFN's Web site ([www.nationalfuelfunds.org](http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org)) features great ideas for hosting a local Action Day event and information about how to get involved in Washington Action Day. To learn more about the New York Action Day effort or to contribute articles or material to the New York Action Day packet, contact CPN's President, Sue Montgomery Corey, at 518/251-2525 or [suemc@capital.net](mailto:suemc@capital.net). Updates on New York's LIHEAP Action Day effort will be posted on CPN's blog, <http://www.communitypowernet.com>

# HEAP Makes Significant Changes in 2007-08

By Paula Cook, OTDA

Last year, New York issued more than one million HEAP benefits to low-income households: 844,530 households in New York received a regular HEAP benefit and 163,007 households received an emergency benefit. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and the Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement component are open and improved for 2007-08. Here are some highlights.

**Income Eligibility Guidelines** are set at the highest level permitted by federal statute. Income eligibility for households of up to 10 members is based on 60% of the State Median Income and is based on 150% of the Federal Poverty Level for a household of 11 or more. New York State's median income increased this year, resulting in an increase in the maximum monthly gross income levels for both Tier I and Tier II households.

Calculation of **Regular Benefit Levels** for households that pay directly for heat is based on the household's income tier, energy burden ratio, and the presence of a vulnerable individual. In 2007-08, to further target the highest benefits to households paying the largest proportion of energy costs in relation to income, the methodology is refined to add two additional income/energy burden ratio ranges. This season, the maximum regular benefit that a household can receive will increase by 23% to \$540 – up from \$440 last year. There will be no increase for households that pay indirectly for heat.

The calculation for **Emergency Benefits** for heat and heat-related emergencies is revised to more realistically reflect the amounts needed to resolve the emergency. Households facing a non-utility heating emergency can get a one-time amount of \$600. The definition of a non-utility emergency situation increased by three days so that there will not be a need for the vendor to make a delivery that results in an off cycle/special delivery charge.

In addition to the changes in the benefit amounts and calculation methodology, OTDA and the major PSC regulated utilities reached an agreement that is expected to benefit the low-income households served by HEAP and to streamline the administration of this component.

In accordance with the new agreement:

- Regular and emergency benefits will be issued separately except in those cases where the household receives a heat included benefit and has a heat related shut off.
- Each benefit will result in the continuation of service for a 30-day period.
- Utilities will accept benefits for current customers.
- Utilities may opt to accept or decline benefits for households who are not current customers.

For 2007-08, the **Heating Equipment Repair / Replacement Component** will be administered as a separate, third benefit category to avoid the need to unnecessarily apply emergency benefit rules in non-emergency situations

For complete information on the 2007-08 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and the Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement Component, go to [www.otda.state.ny.us/main/heap](http://www.otda.state.ny.us/main/heap).

## Thoughts To Ponder

How can we, as professionals, improve the impact of the HEAP program? Each year there are public hearings held around the State. If you have suggestions on how to improve the HEAP program, attend one of these hearings. Dates are posted on OTDA's Website, [www.otda.state.ny.us](http://www.otda.state.ny.us) Voice your concerns!

## Actions To Take

HEAP funding is not guaranteed. Funded by the Federal Government, each year the program's funding is voted on by our legislators. Share stories with your legislators on how HEAP made a difference to families you serve.

# Heating Up Your Home without Emptying Out Your Pockets

By Clinton Britt, NYSERDA

New Yorkers know what it means when the local weatherperson says “bundle up; it’s going to be a cold one out there today.” In Oswego, it can mean 10 feet of snow; in Buffalo, it will be lake-effect winds and traffic-stopping snowdrifts; in Syracuse, expect sudden blizzards; in Albany, there will be sub-zero temperatures; the North Country will have whiteouts; in the Southern Tier, we will feel chilling winds; and in New York City, there will be freezing rain. With our winter climate, it is essential for you to know how to protect yourself and your family from the ice-numbing chill, regardless of where you live in the Empire State. Following these tips will aid you in paying your energy bill, maintaining energy efficiency and most importantly, keeping warm!

- Use a programmable thermostat with your heating system to automatically lower the temperature at night or when no one is home. This enables you to use the heater only when you need it the most.
- Keep the warm air in and the cold air out by adding insulation, caulking and weather-stripping around doors, attic access, windows, outlets and any area that can let the cold air in and the warm air out. At the very least, place a rolled up towel at the bottom of a door to prevent a heavy draft from coming in through a leaky door.
- It is a good time to check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and replace old batteries. Remember - as you seal up leaks in your home this becomes even more important.
- Keep blinds and drapes of sun-exposed windows open in the daytime and closed at night. This allows the sun’s rays to warm your home during the day and keeps the heat in at night.
- Have your heating system inspected by a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR contractor. If you have a forced-air heating system, check your air filters once a month and replace if dirty.
- If you have a window air conditioning unit, remove it for the winter months to prevent heat from escaping through and around the unit. If it cannot be removed, buy a cover to prevent drafts.
- Install rubber gaskets (found in home improvement stores) behind outlets and switch plates on exterior walls.
- Ceiling fans can keep you comfortable in the winter too! Reversing the direction of the blades pushes warm air down into the room.

The most effective strategy will incorporate a combination of all of the above suggestions.

For more energy saving tips visit [www.getenergysmart.org](http://www.getenergysmart.org) or [www.nyserda.org](http://www.nyserda.org).

## Actions to Consider

Share this list of suggestions with friends, family, colleagues and strangers to help everyone save money, increase energy efficiency and, most importantly, keep warm!

# Walk a Mile Brings Policy and Reality Together

Mary Grassi, NYSERDA

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to walk a day in another person's shoes? How would that affect your mental state, your spending norms or even the food you eat? Are those on the low-income side of the scale truly different from others? Are politicians as out of touch as we might imagine them to be? "Walk a Mile", a program that has drawn national media attention from ABC Nightly News, The Today Show, and National Public Radio, answers those questions.

"Walk a Mile" is a national educational program created to bridge the gap between policy makers and those who are most affected by policy. Natasha Grossman, Northwest Institute for Children & Families, Program Manager states: "The belief was that better policy would be made as a result of policy makers having a personal, experiential understanding of the real-life barriers to self sufficiency. It was also created to involve low-income constituents in the political process. Finally, it was developed to break down stereotypes and myths - on both sides - the myth of the uncaring, distant, greedy policymaker and the myth of the lazy, cheating, uneducated welfare recipient."

For one month, New York State policymakers will be paired with low-income constituents so they may have a personal understanding of poverty from an

expert - the individual or family living in poverty. A food stamp budget will be given to policymakers and they will be asked to feed their families with that amount of money. Policymakers will also meet and discuss issues with their match providing the low-income participant with a chance to play an active role in government. The results of this powerful exchange will be shared at receptions held in participating legislators' districts around the state and at the LIFE 2008 Statewide Conference, May 20-21, 2008 in Albany New York. For more information, contact Chris Coll, NYSERDA at 1.866.697.3732 ext 3425.

## Consider This Action!

If you are reading this newsletter, you know the plight of the low-income family. Have you thought about educating the policymakers that you know personally from your work? Make sure that your policymakers understand the difficult challenges facing low-income families in your community.

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burdened with adverse environmental impacts because of where they are located (e.g., near power plants, waste sites, high traffic areas, or in urban or rural areas).

Consumer outreach and education was also a major topic of discussion at the meetings. Specifically, PSC staff sought input on what messages must be communicated to encourage energy efficiency and which vehicles are the most effective to reach various audiences.

The feedback received at the regional roundtables has been compiled and shared with the PSC Administrative Law Judges and Staff Team to consider in the development of policies and programs that will ultimately be recommended to the Commission.

## Consider Taking Action!

As described above, "15 X 15" means reaching the goal of reducing energy usage by 15% from forecast levels by 2015. How to reach this ambitious goal is a question that everyone should have a voice in answering, and through the PSC's Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard proceeding, there is a process allowing all consumers to be heard. As a low-income advocate, you can play a role in this important effort by visiting the PSC's AskPSC.com Web site to stay informed, and by sharing what you learn with the consumers you serve. You can also take advantage of other opportunities to provide input to the PSC

## 2008 Statewide LIFE Conference

### Save The Date

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May 20-21, 2008 • Albany Marriott • Albany, New York

Mark your calendars now for this important event.

### LIFE Steering Committee

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- New York State Department of Public Service
- Association for Energy Affordability
- Cattaraugus Community Action
- Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation
- Community Energy Services, Inc.
- Community Power Network of New York State
- Consolidated Edison Company of New York
- Dutchess County Community Action Agency, Inc.
- KeySpan Energy Delivery
- LIPA/REAP
- National Fuel Gas Distribution Company
- National Grid
- New York State Consumer Protection Board
- New York State Department of State Division of Community Services
- New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal
- New York State Electric & Gas Corporation
- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
- New York State Office for the Aging
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
- New York State Weatherization Directors' Association
- Public Utility Law Project
- Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc.
- Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation

### Please share and forward this newsletter to colleagues.

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If you know someone who you would like us to add to the LIFE News mailing list, or if you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please send an e-mail to Chris Coll at [czc@nyserdera.org](mailto:czc@nyserdera.org)

To submit an article to be considered for inclusion in a future issue of LIFE News, please contact LIFE Steering Committee Member, Elizabeth Katz, at 518-486-7282 or by e-mail at [elizabeth\\_katz@dps.state.ny.us](mailto:elizabeth_katz@dps.state.ny.us)

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